

XVII.—*Remarks on the Flora of the Northern Shores of America, with Tabulated Observations made by Mr. F. F. PAYSE on the seasonal development of Plants at Cape Prince of Wales, Hudson Strait, during 1886. By GEORGE LAWSON, Ph.D., LL.D.*

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The observations made by Mr. Payne on the progress of vegetation during the spring, summer and autumn of 1886, at Cape Prince of Wales, Hudson Strait, cannot fail to be of interest and use to those who are desirous of definite knowledge respecting the climate of the Hudson Strait shores during the period of active plant growth. But a knowledge of our northern vegetation is not only of interest in enabling us to form a judgment as to the general character of the climate, or ascertain how far a given district is capable of producing cultivated crops or plants that are in any way useful in the economical sense; there are other questions which, if more remote from immediate practical utility, are yet not of less interest from a scientific point of view, and every contribution of information, whether in form of observations or specimens, is of value. The floras of our northern shores gradually merge northwardly into the composite flora found within the Arctic circle, commonly called "the Arctic flora," the remarkable composition of which has given rise to speculation as to its origin. Sir Joseph Hooker accounts for it by assuming extensive changes of climate and of land and sea, leading to a spread of Scandinavian species over the whole polar zone, and the subsequent introduction of Asiatic and American species, with which the Scandinavian are so largely associated in all the Arctic districts except those of Europe and Greenland. Some of the difficulties of this view are overcome, if we admit, with Darwin and Hooker, the great antiquity of the Scandinavian flora, and the hypothesis originated by Edward Forbes and extended by Charles Darwin, that previous to the Glacial Epoch, that flora was more uniformly distributed over the whole polar zone than now; that during that period it was driven southward in every longitude, even across the tropics into the south temperate zone; and that, on the succeeding warmth of the present epoch, the surviving species again spread northward, accompanied by aborigines of the countries which they had invaded during their southern migration, and leaving behind on the northward march stragglers of the Scandinavian flora that found permanent refuge in the mountains of the warmer zones. The discussion of such an hypothesis necessarily opens up questions of variation, adaptation, and survival, under changing conditions of climate and over large areas of the earth's surface. It will be seen, at once, how important it is to have our Northern American species carefully collocated with those of Northern Europe and Asia, especially such of them as belong, or are allied, to species of the true Scandinavian flora. It is not the discovery of new species on our northern shores that is the object most to be desired in the interest of science, for we have already a confusing plethora of names, but rather the collection of material to enable us to ascertain more accurately the relations to each